

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Any Harris  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sanford Bishop  
Ranking Member  
Agriculture Subcommittee  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harris and Ranking Member Bishop::

As you work to finalize Fiscal Year 2024 funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, we urge you to fully fund the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) to ensure that the program can serve all eligible pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and young children throughout the entire fiscal year. We request Congress provide \$6.35 billion in overall budget authority for WIC, invest set-aside funding in technology modernization, and extend the enhanced Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for fruits and vegetables through fiscal year 2024.

WIC is the nation's premier preventive public health nutrition program, supporting over 6.3 million low-income mothers and young children who have or are at risk for developing nutrition-related diseases and disorders. WIC benefits are not limited only to food; participants also benefit from nutrition education, breastfeeding education and support, and referrals to medical and social services. Study after study has shown that WIC works. Taxpayers receive a healthy return in cost savings of at least \$2.48 avoided for every dollar of investment.

Studies have repeatedly shown that WIC improves birth outcomes for high-risk mothers, reduces the likelihood of preterm birth and low birthweight babies, reduces the risk of infant mortality by 16 percent, and helps to get women into prenatal care earlier. WIC is associated with reduced rates of childhood obesity, increased dietary quality and variety for children participating in WIC, higher immunization rates among young children, and higher cognitive development scores for children enrolled in WIC compared to their peers. Adequate funding for investments in these proven public health outcomes are especially crucial as the country continues to grapple with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, including increased rates of childhood obesity.

We particularly urge an extension of WIC's enhanced fruits and vegetable benefits through fiscal year 2024. This enhanced benefit, reaching nearly 5 million women and children, directly reflects science-based targets laid out by the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) to deliver at least 50 percent of fruit and vegetable intake recommended by the recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs). Following the implementation of enhanced Cash Value Benefit (CVB) in spring 2021, research by the National WIC Association and the Nutrition Policy Institute found a ¼ cup daily increase in fruit and vegetable consumption among children.

This increase likewise provides economic benefits, reflected in more than triple the amount of fruit and vegetable transactions at retail stores and independent grocers, stronger business at farmers market, and investments that return up the food supply chain to growers and producers. USDA has begun rulemaking to update WIC food package in accordance with the NAS recommendations and the recent DGAs, a step that will improve priority nutrient intake and help WIC grow a healthier next generation. Enhanced CVB must remain in place through fiscal year 2024 as the WIC food packages are updated, building a bridge to revised food packages and sustaining this critical investment that sets children up for future life success.

We urge appropriators to include \$6.35 billion for WIC in fiscal year 2024, reflective of growing participation and external cost pressures on the program. Food prices have risen significantly in the past year, including a

70% increase in the cost of eggs, a 16% increase in the cost of both whole grains and cereals, and a 14% increase in dairy costs. The structure of WIC's food package, which provides most food on a quantity basis, insulates participants from some of these cost pressures, but those increased expenditures are absorbed by the program. Additionally, Abbott Nutrition's recall of infant formula products required State WIC Agencies to provide additional purchasing options to families, as directed by Congress, defraying some of the impact of nationwide infant formula shortages on program participants. However, State Agencies not contracted with Abbott Nutrition were also left to cover those costs with existing food dollars. These external pressures, in combination with rising participation that will increase even further in FY24, necessitate increased investment in WIC, as reflected in the President's Budget request.

We urge Congress to provide \$6.35 billion in funding authority for FY24, which should be inclusive of both the enhanced CVB levels and dedicated set-aside funding for the following purposes:

### ***Breastfeeding***

We ask that you continue the funding level of \$90 million for WIC's Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program, to provide tailored peer-to-peer support. WIC peer counselors are demonstrated to improve breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity and close racial disparities in breastfeeding. Since FY 2020, the current funding level has helped State Agencies hire additional peer counselors, extend peer counselor hours, and resolve other service gaps – especially in rural areas – to continue WIC's essential work in promoting, supporting, and strengthening breastfeeding services.

### ***Infrastructure***

We urge you to continue funding WIC infrastructure at \$14 million, which supports a variety of essential program priorities, including brick-and-mortar infrastructure repairs and improvements, special breastfeeding projects, and innovative special projects that enhance program access and participant retention.

### ***Technology***

We also urge renewed investment of \$50 million in WIC's Management Information System (MIS) set-aside, authorized under the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010, which has not been funded since FY17. Growing participation, adoption of modernized program technologies, and implementation of the new food packages will require updates to WIC's MIS programs. Specific funding for this purpose will enable the program to better integrate with healthcare systems and new shopping technologies, matching participants experience in other healthcare and shopping settings.

WIC's early intervention supports the healthy growth and development of America's next generation, leading to better birth and health outcomes and saving the American taxpayer costs in the long run. We believe this is one of the strongest investments that Congress can make. We appreciate your consideration of this request and again urge you to ensure that WIC is robustly funded in FY 2024.

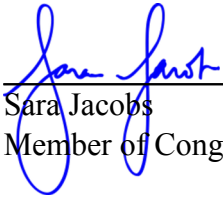
Sincerely,



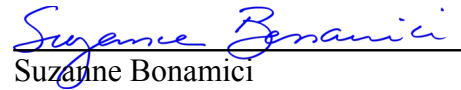
Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



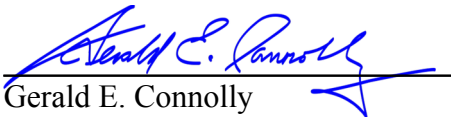
Jenniffer González-Colón  
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



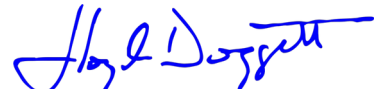
Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell  
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Joyce Beatty  
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Lloyd Doggett  
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Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

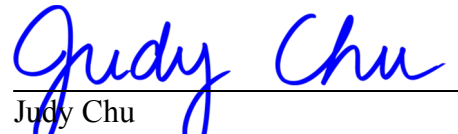


Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress



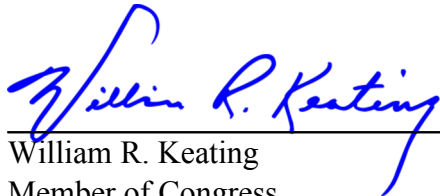
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Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



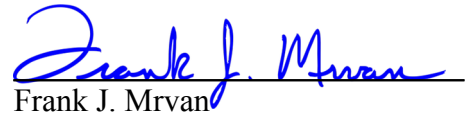
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Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



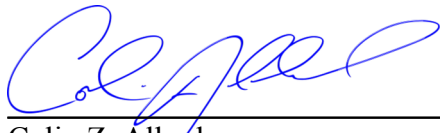
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



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Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress



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Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



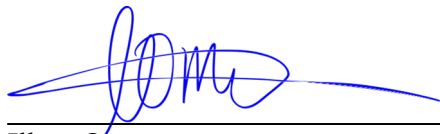
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



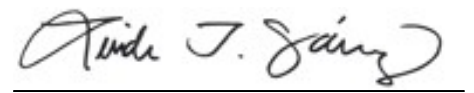
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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher  
Member of Congress



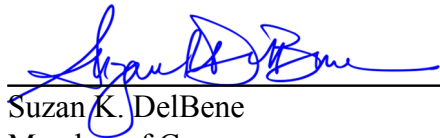
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton  
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Haley M. Stevens  
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Debbie Dingell  
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Mike Thompson  
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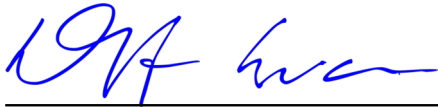
Stacey E. Plaskett  
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Bill Foster  
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Dina Titus  
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Dwight Evans  
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Marcus J. Molinaro  
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Doris Matsui  
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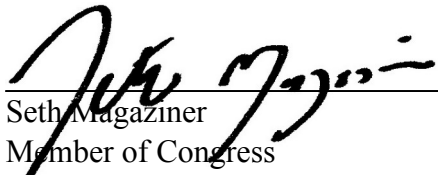
Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline  
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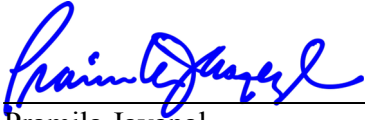
Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



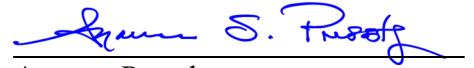
Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



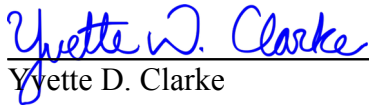
Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



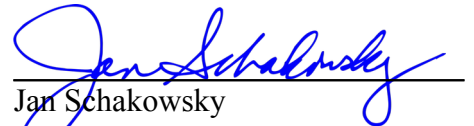
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



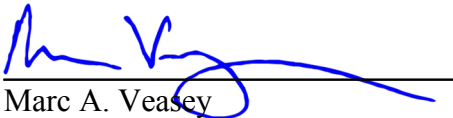
Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



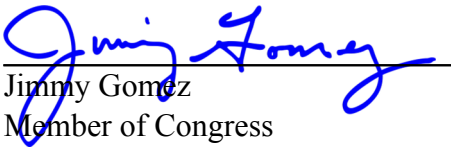
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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



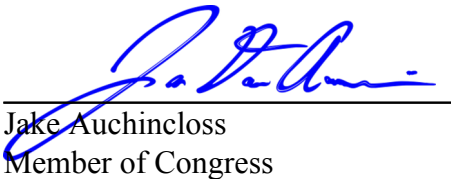
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Jimmy Gomez  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



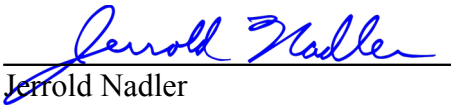
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Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



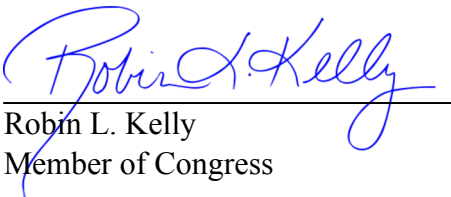
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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



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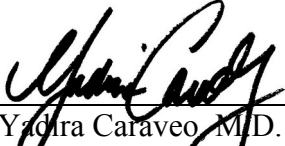
Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress





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Ysaura Caraveo, M.D.  
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Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress



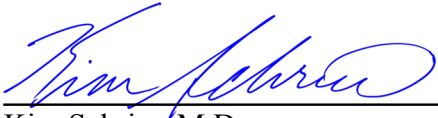
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Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress



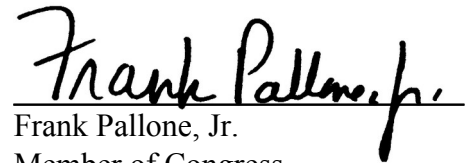
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Abigail Davis Spanberger  
Member of Congress



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress



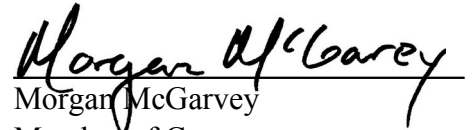
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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



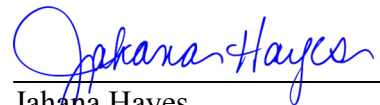
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Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress



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Marie Gluesenkamp Perez  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
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Val Hoyle  
Member of Congress



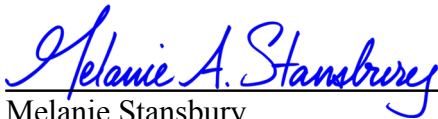
Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress



Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



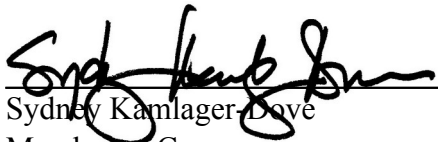
Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



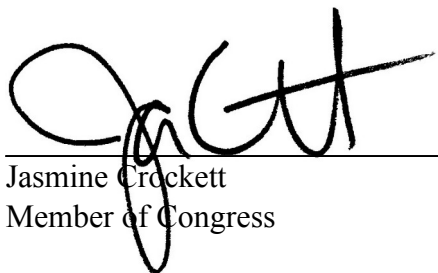
Tony Cardenas  
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



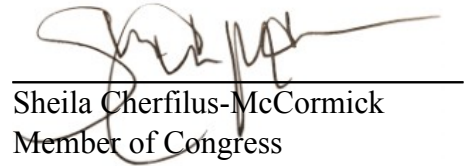
Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



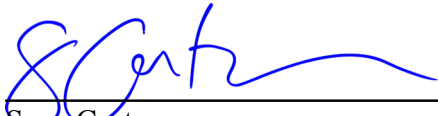
Nikki Budzinski  
Member of Congress



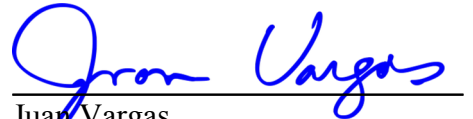
Brittany Pettersen  
Member of Congress



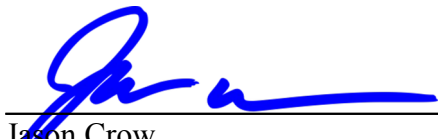
Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress




Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



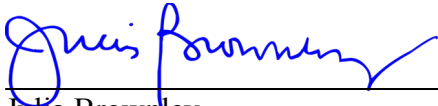
Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



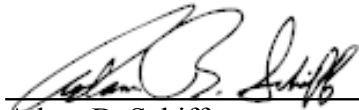
Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



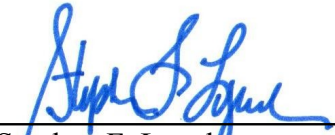
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



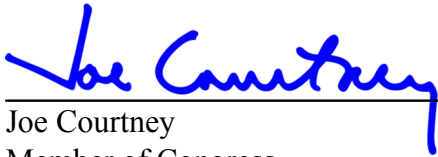
Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



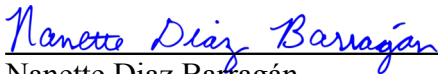
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



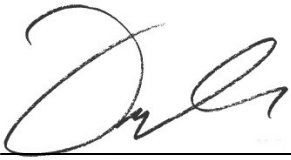
Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



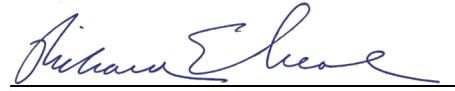
Maxine Waters  
Member of Congress



Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



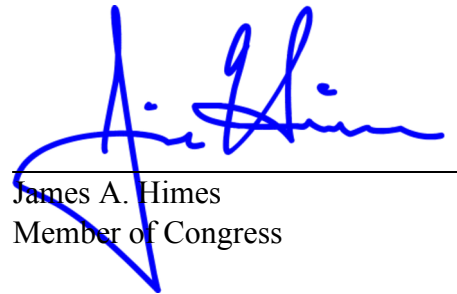
Troy Carter  
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress  
, Committee on Ways and Means



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



James A. Himes  
Member of Congress



Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



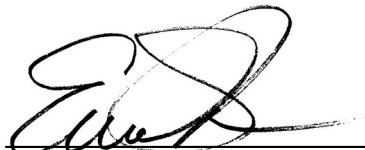
Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress



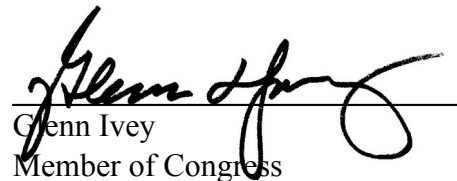
Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



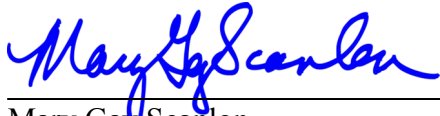
Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



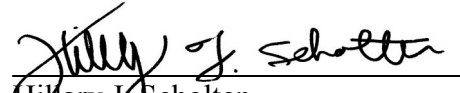
Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress




Glenn Ivey  
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



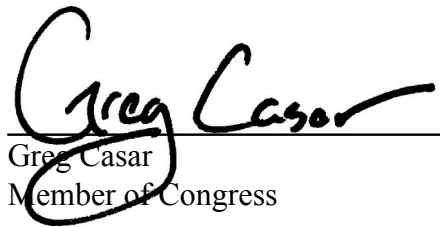
Hillary J. Scholten  
Member of Congress



Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress



Gabe Vasquez  
Member of Congress



Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress




Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress

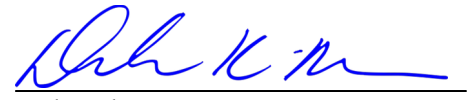


Donald G. Davis  
Member of Congress



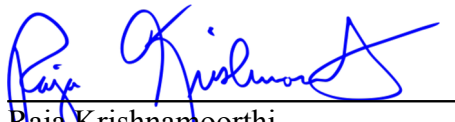
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John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress




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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



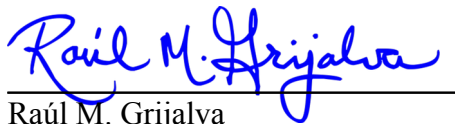
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Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress




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Dean Phillips  
Member of Congress



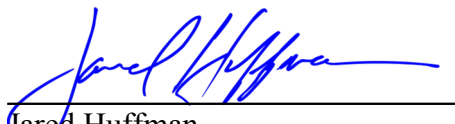
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress




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Andrea Salinas  
Member of Congress




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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Jonathan L. Jackson  
Member of Congress



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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress



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Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress